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John Cook, Pioneer settler of Illinois, One of the Founders of the Town of Collinsville

John Cook, subject of this sketch, was born in Hesse-Homberg, Germany, January 1st, 1769. He came to America during the Revolutionary War and with his parents settled at Little York, Pennsylvania. They afterward removed to Shepherdstown, Virginia, (now West Virginia), where they resided until he reached the age of manhood.

He left his father's home one Sunday morning to spend the day with friends near Sharpsburg, Maryland. He mounted his pony and with two companions crossed over the Potomac River to Sharpsburg. On reaching Sharpsburg they learned of a company that was then being formed to go west. They proceeded no farther, joined the company and without returning home, journeyed westward with them. They finally reached St. Louis, a western town which was at that time coming into prominence, he (Mr. Cook) riding his pony all the way. Leaving St. Louis, he came to Illinois. In the year 1810 he located on the present site of Collinsville and built the first cabin there. He married Catharine Cox, daughter of Anthony Cox, who lived at the foot of the bluffs west of Collinsville, and for some years they lived in this first home. They afterwards removed three and a half miles east of Collinsville and settled on the farm where they spent the remainder of their lives.

Six children were born to them, four sons and two daughters, namely: Wesley, born 1813; Mary, 1815; William, 1818; Harrison, 1820; John and Catharine (twins) 1824. The two older children were born in the first home.

March 27th, 1844, John Cook died, aged seventy-five years. His wife, Catharine Cox Cook, who was twenty-one years his

junior, being born April 3rd, 1790, survived until November, 1863, when she died, aged nearly seventy-four years. They were both laid to rest in the cemetery on the farm where they spent the most of their married life. The monuments erected to their memory are still standing. John Cook and wife were Baptists, members of Bethel Church.

John Cook, though not a large land owner, was possessed of considerable property, which he bequeathed to his wife and children; Jacob Cox, his wife's brother, and Robert Lemen, a neighbor, witnessing his will.

Several of Mr. Cook's descendants reside in Madison County. Three, a grandson and two granddaughters, children of William Cook, reside in the vicinity of Collinsville. They are I. W. Cook of Troy, Anna C. Maurer and Matilda Cook, who reside east of Collinsville, near the old homestead.

Mr. Cook never returned to his old home in Virginia, nor did he again see his father or mother, but some of his brothers visited him in his western home, one brother locating in Missouri and one or two in Illinois.

The following additional statement as to the subject of our sketch was copied for us by J. B. Lemen of O'Fallon, Illinois, from the historical and biographical writings of his father, the late Rev. James Lemen of Ridge Prairie, St. Clair County, Illinois, who kept a journal containing brief sketches of the pioneer Illinois families, and State and church matters and events generally, and we will just insert the full sketch which bears the date of June 10th, 1865, and is as follows: "John Cook, of German extraction, removed from Virginia and settled in Illinois at an early date on the present site of Collinsville, being the first settler there. Like the pioneer Lemen's and Ogle's, he was anti-slavery in sentiment, and like them, politically, a friend and follower of Thomas Jefferson. He married Miss Catharine Cox and presently they moved some three miles east of Collinsville where they secured a farm, made them a comfortable home and reared their family. He was a successful farmer. In their views both Mr. Cook and wife were Baptists and members of Bethel Church, living and dying in that faith. He died at a ripe old age, greatly

esteemed by all who knew him. His wife, a most excellent Christian lady, twenty years his junior, died recently. She was a sister of the genial and widely known Jacob B. Cox. In early times the Cox ancestors came from England to America and settled in Virginia. The parents of Catharine and Jacob (Virginians) settled in Illinois at an early day near Collinsville."

Thus closes the biography of John Cook, a pioneer resident of Illinois and first settler of Collinsville, as gleaned from the records handed down to his descendants, and which has not been published in full in any history of our country or State.